

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 and 45-48 were pending when the present Office Action was mailed. Claims 6-7, 13, and 45 are modified by this response and no claims are cancelled or added by this response. Accordingly, claims 1-13 and 45-48 remain pending.

The Office Action rejected claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2 as being indefinite. Applicants have amended claim 6 to clarify that the electronic mail client displays the indication.

Applicants have amended claims 1, 7, 13, and 45 to improve readability and more distinctly claim their inventions.

The Office Action rejected claims 1-13 and 45-48 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,496,849 ("Hansen") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,769,012 ("Liu"). The applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. Hansen and Liu were previously described in applicants' earlier responses.

According to the Office Action, while Hansen neither teaches nor suggests "the electronic mail client application of the computing device updates the displayed indication of the new collaborative electronic mail message that includes the name of the author to indicate that it has been modified, without displaying another indication of the new collaborative electronic mail message in the list of electronic mail messages," as recited by claim 1, Liu does. (See, e.g., Office Action, page 4 and 12.) Liu's Figure 3 depicts a hierarchical structure containing messages of an email threaded discussion. As an example, sender "ABC Corp." responded on 3/24/2000 to a "Request for quote" from John Doe, who sent an email message on 3/23/2000. Liu neither teaches nor suggests that a message in the threaded discussion can be modified. Moreover, whenever a user responds to one of the messages in the threaded discussion, another message is added to the list of messages. Further, the newly added message indicates the person responding and not the original author of the thread. Applicants' technology is different from both Liu and Hansen, alone or combined, as described in detail below.

When a recipient or creator of a collaboration message using applicants' technology responds to the collaboration message, such as by adding or modifying a comment contained in the collaboration message, the electronic mail system does not indicate the modification as an arrival of a new message. Liu neither teaches nor suggests that a message can be modified by the creator or recipient without indicating receipt of a new message.

The Office Action further points to Liu at 2:60-67. (Office action, pages 4 and 12.) That section of Liu describes U.S. Patent No. 5,930,471. According to the text provided in Liu relating to that patent, that patent describes a virtual mailbox that is jointly accessible by senders and recipients. The text provides no indication that a message can be modified by the creator or recipient without indicating receipt of a new message.

Thus, none of the applied references teaches or suggests at least "the electronic mail client application of the computing device updates the displayed indication of the new collaborative electronic mail message that includes the name of the author to indicate that it has been modified, without displaying another indication of the new collaborative electronic mail message in the list of electronic mail messages," as previously recited by claim 1. Nevertheless, applicants have amended claim 1 to more distinctly claim "the updated indication including the name of the author instead of the recipient as a sender of the collaborative electronic mail message."

A creator or author is the first person to start collaboration by creating a new collaborative electronic mail message. A sender sends a new collaborative electronic mail message or a response thereto. In the applicants' technology, a recipient who responds to the creator's collaboration message is a sender but is not identified in the 'from' attribute, which always identifies the creator. In both Liu and Hansen, an electronic mail message has a sender and the sender is identified in the 'from' attribute. Neither Liu nor Hansen, alone or combined, teach or suggest "the updated indication including the name of the author instead of the recipient as a sender of the collaborative electronic mail message," as is recited by claim 1.

Claim 13 now recites "the electronic mail message has a sender but instead identifies the creator of the collaborative mail message as the sender of the electronic mail message by specifying the creator in a 'from' attribute of the electronic mail message." Neither Liu nor Hansen, alone or combined, teach or suggest this feature.

Claim 45 now recites "a 'from' field that identifies an author of the content in the content field even when the content was added by a sender that is not the author." As described immediately above, neither Hansen nor Liu (alone or combined) teach or suggest this feature.

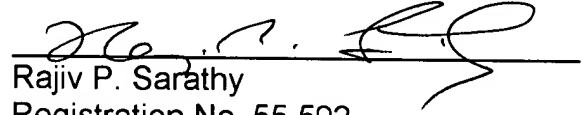
According to the Office Action, Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) allows the originator of an email to set the "sender" field of an outgoing message and so it is obvious "to use the obtained author's email address to send the newly created zaplet to all participants." (Office Action, page 13.) Applicants first point out that collaborative electronic mail messages are different from zaplets as previously indicated by applicants in a response to a prior office action. Second, the mere fact that references can be combined or modified does not render the resulting combination obvious unless the prior art also suggests the desirability of the combination. (See MPEP § 2143.01.) Neither Hansen nor Liu teach or suggest the desirability of identifying the author instead of the sender (e.g., person who responds to a collaborative electronic mail message). Even if SMTP is capable of doing indicating the author, there is no suggestion in the applied references to make this modification.

Thus, because the independent claims recite a novel combination of elements that is neither taught nor suggested by the applied references, the applicants believe that the claims are allowable. Because the dependent claims import the limitations from the claims on which they depend, they are also allowable.

Based on the above amendments and remarks, the applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application and its early allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-6478.

Respectfully submitted,
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